

GIRL POWER

Two decades since the Spice Girls changed the world (yes they did) with their brash sermons on female empowerment, is Girl Power finally materialising in the music industry? Was their message - so difficult to clarify through the hype - actually empty, or was it in fact a prophecy?

Growing up I listened to Biggie, 2Pac and Dre, appalling my parents with my mutterings of 'Bitches ain't shit but hoes and tricks' hiding behind my headphones. I suppose I thought it was 'cool' to be 'down' with these lyrics. As I tried to impress the boys - and hide my braces and that fact I was a foot taller than each of them - my knowledge of music was the only thing that gained me respect. But as my admiration in the playground increased with my knowledge of Eminem's 'Just bend over and take it like a slut okay Ma?' verse on Kill You, was my self-respect dwindling? Does grinding to Biggie in a 'This is what a feminist looks like' t-shirt make you a hypocrite?

This is the dichotomy dealt with by British artist Zoe Buckman. For 2014's "Every Curve" series, Buckman embroidered misogynistic lyrics by her favourite hip-hop artists onto vintage lingerie. Under further scrutiny the blatant visual contradiction between the soft femininity of the 1950s peach girdles and corsets and the crude, harsh lyrics opens up to a conversation about culture at large. In this restrictive underwear woman is formed under the male gaze, the lyrics are for a male ear; where is her voice? Decades

on, the lingerie's improved but has the song writing?

Name the top male stars in the industry at the moment, you know the ones whose every bar fight spawn a thousand memes; we've got Tyler the Creator, Kanye Kardashian and Chris 'these hoes ain't loyal unless you hit em in the face' Brown singing the same detracting lyrics that Big L made his name from in the early 90s. Apparently Kim plays Kanye's latest album Yeezus to their baby girl to soothe her to sleep. 'Black girl sippin' white wine, put my fist in her like a civil rights sign' - that line's sure to send her straight off to dreams of flowers, puppies, clouds and daddy fisting a drunk girl. If Robin Thicke and Pharrell's "Blurred Lines" - a song that gained notoriety by playing on the 'blurred lines' of date rape - can get to number one the world over, is there any hope? Fed up of waiting for the boys to change, sisters are doing it for themselves.

Not just Beyoncé and her 'let me cater to you' brand of fauxminism. Punk group Pussy Riot have been jailed for their anti-Putin, pro-LGBT rights and pro-feminist demonstrations in Russia. They're heroes and that's Putin it mildly. FKA Twigs, an artist who actually has more to say than 'I am R Pattz's girlfriend', such as 'I am the most avant-garde producer, choreographer, singer and songwriter in the world right now', recently she spoke out about what being female means to her.

What makes me a woman is when I know I've produced a song myself ... or when I've made a video and released it into the world... Like, fuck anything else—fuck how tall I am or how long my hair is!

FKA TWIGS ROOKIE 2014

I have even found myself agreeing with Taylor Swift, a woman I always adored to abhor, who is sick of being labelled a victim of her many past relationships by the misogynistic press. If a woman dates numerous famous men she must be desperate or needy or even insane. When a man does it 'cough' Leo 'cough' he's heralded as a player, not - as we should perhaps assume - gay or riddled with herpes. But this is not about man-hating; Canadian singer and producer Grimes has blogged about the confusion between feminism and misandry writing, 'I'm sad that my desire to be treated as an equal and as a human being is interpreted as hatred of men, rather than a request to be included and respected'.

Feminism is the buzzword of 2014; it has been dismissed, flattered and picked apart by the press and social media, but every time it is hashtagged it engages a new dialogue and a new participant. If this is truly the fourth wave of feminism and buzzwords sell records...

If you can't work this equation then I guess I'll have to show you the door.

